

# Michael Keane eager to emulate Manchester United legend Rio Ferdinand

RIO FERDINAND was Michael Keane's idol growing up – and the Manchester United starlet even had his name on the back of his shirt.

By **Phil Cadden** / Published 1st June 2014



KEANE TO BE THE NEXT RIO: Manchester United youngster Michael Keane hopes to emulate club legend Rio Ferdinand [GETTY]

Now the highly-rated England Under-20s centre-back wants to take his first-team spot at Old Trafford.

Ferdinand, 35, ended a 12-year association with United at the end of last season and that has opened the door for the likes of Keane to stake a claim under new boss Louis van Gaal.

Keane, who has impressed for Gareth Southgate's young Three Lions in the Toulon tournament, said: "I hope to take Rio's shirt. That's the dream for me. When I was young I always had Rio on the back of my shirt.

"He was my idol when he first joined United and he still is. Luckily, I've managed to train with him for a few years.

"It's sad to see him go. He was a great person to have around in the changing room and he was great with the young lads. He speaks to everyone and always gives you advice."

Ferdinand, with six Premier League titles, the Champions League crown and 81 England caps to his name, even went out of his way to call rookie defender Keane and tell him how to improve his game.

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**“He was my idol when he first joined United and he still is”**

Michael Keane

Keane, who has spent spells on loan at Leicester, Derby and Blackburn in the last two seasons, added: “Rio’s a really nice guy and he’ll ring or text you as he wants to give you feedback. If you make a mistake in a game he’ll ring you and say what you should do better positionally.

“It was a surprise at first but now I just see him as a friend. I know I can go to him whenever I want. Sometimes footballers get bad reputations but Rio’s not like that at all. Behind the scenes at the training ground there is no one better to have around.

“He’s loud both on and off the pitch and he talks to everyone.”

Now Keane hopes that education from one of England’s finest will aid his development when Dutch boss Van Gaal takes the United hotseat after the World Cup.

Keane, who has made three United appearances in the League Cup and was on the bench for the Premier League clash with Hull last month, said: “I still think I’ve got a chance of making it at United. While I still think I’ve got that chance I will stay and try to prove myself.

“I’ve heard the new manager likes to bring young players through and that’s always been the way at United. And obviously, with Giggsey staying on as assistant-manager, then that can only benefit the young players.

“Hopefully we will have a good pre-season and get the chance to prove ourselves. If we do then we’ll have a chance to play.

“I’ve been out on loan and been lucky that I went to three really good clubs. They all had good training grounds, good facilities and great managers.

“When you first play in the Championship you are a bit taken aback by how physical it is – particularly as a centre-half.

“I made my debut against Kevin Davies and I didn’t win a header against him. And I got about ten elbows.

“I knew not even Rio could help with that one – so I spoke to Nemanja Vidic instead!”

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